

WASHINGTON GOSSIP.

SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT IN CONGRESS.
PROBABLE WORK OF THE SENATE—THE HOUSE GIVING EVIDENCE OF A SPIRIT OF REFORM, THE SENATE NOT SO PROMISING—CONSERVATIVE VIEWS ON THE CURRENCY QUESTION BECOMING MORE POPULAR.

[FROM A REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16.—The first ten days of the session, although nearly fruitless in accomplished legislation, have not been without valuable results. It can now be said with certainty that the general politico-moral tone of the House has greatly improved during the recess, and that there is little danger either of retrogression on the currency question or of the passage of such jobs as the Texas Pacific Subsidy, or the proposed Ditch-Digging Swindle. To get at the condition of the moral nerve of the House, so to speak, and see whether it had relaxed since last session or was higher strung, required time and the past few days have given observers the desired information, and enabled thoughtful legislators to lay their plans for the winter's work. The result of the elections has had much to do in producing the noticeable improvement in the opinions and purposes of members. There is more seriousness than before, and more desire to get about doing something that will benefit the country. A wholesome respect for the discriminating good sense of the people shows itself in unexpected quarters. Members, who from a long course of success, without merit, had come to believe the mass of the voting population to be either stupid or dishonest, have had cause to change their views. On the majority side there is little left of that offensive arrogance of power which has been manifested so long. The thoughts uppermost in the minds of scores of Republicans are, How shall we regain the lost confidence of our constituents? How rehabilitate the party? How call back the deserters and inspire our forces with something of the old enthusiasm? And such reflections often succeed the sober second thought, "Has there not been something radically wrong in the legislation and administration of the past six years which it is high time to reform?"

In reference to the currency question it can no longer be doubted that the House has returned more conservative than it went away. Doctrinaires like Kelley cling to their old opinions with the redoubled zeal of self-absorbed enthusiasts; demagogues like Butler continue to advocate their fanatical theories in the hopes of rallying a party of dunces, or at least of attracting to themselves the public notice which they crave; but it is not to be questioned that the average sentiment of the body has made substantial advance in the direction of correct principles. Besides the inevitable progress of sound financial theories with the lapse of time, other causes have worked to produce this satisfactory result. Dozens of members mounted the dishonest currency hobby last session because they thought their constituents believed in it. They were defeated for reelection and have no further interest in pressing doctrines which they never more than half believed, or never believed at all.

Many others, who were more fortunate in the elections, became convinced while at home that although the inflationists were strong in their districts, the portions of their constituencies whose support was best worth having were resolutely opposed to further issues of irredeemable paper. The hard-money men have been apprised of several recessions from these two classes of members. They are in excellent spirits and are determined to make an effort to pass a bill which, if not going as far as they would wish it to, will be a step forward towards the goal of specie payments. Very soon a gathering of leading Republicans will be held to consider the matter and endeavor to agree upon the outline of such a bill. Pronounced inflationists will not be invited, but the class of members who, while clamoring for more currency, have never denounced clamor and silver as "relies of barbarism" will be represented. There are strong hopes entertained that the work of such an assembly will not be abortive, as was that of the similar caucus which met at Speaker Elaine's house last session to consider the same subject. Almost everybody believes now that the salvation of the Republican party depends upon the passage this winter of some satisfactory currency bill, and this conviction will go a great way toward producing harmony.

All that has been said above applies solely to the House. The Senate has developed nothing new. Its members have brought back from their constituencies many resolutions to reform the many objectionable practices and pretenses which have made the body so unpopular of late—the trucking to the Administration, the servile confirmation of bad appointments, the fastening of jobs, the intolerance of honest difference of opinion—the fact has yet to be manifested. Thus far little has been done but to adjourn from day to day.

THE DISPUTE BETWEEN IOWA AND NEBRASKA.

HERITS OF THE OMAHA BRIDGE CASE—THE ATTEMPT TO SETTLE THE CONTROVERSY BY ACT OF CONGRESS—A NEBRASKA MEMBER'S OPPOSITION TO THE PENDING BILL.

[FROM A REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18.—The Omaha Bridge bill will not come up in the House again until after the recess. It is an attempt to settle the old quarrel between the States of Nebraska and Iowa as to the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad in favor of the latter, and is earnestly opposed by the Nebraska member, Judge Crounse. The act incorporating the Pacific Road provided that it should begin at a point on the western boundary of the State of Iowa, to be determined by the President. Inasmuch as the western boundary of Iowa is the middle of the Missouri River, this legislation left the question open as to which bank the terminus should be upon. The President fixed the point of crossing by designating a section of land in Nebraska, and on it the company struck their stakes. Soon three Iowa railroads built their lines to the river bank, and for a long time each carried across the passengers and freight destined westward over the Union Pacific. A large sum of money was raised in Omaha, and a site for a depot was purchased for the road. The city of Council Bluffs, lying about three miles from Omaha, and separated from the Missouri River by a "wet bottom," claimed that the road should terminate there, and a bitter hostility arose upon the question between the two cities. After a time the railroad company built a bridge under a charter as a bridge company. To prevent the connecting Iowa roads from running their cars over it and thus settling the controversy by transferring the actual point of junction to Omaha, the Iowa Legislature in 1872 passed an act forbidding them to do so. This act was an embargo on commerce of a nature never attempted before by any State. As all the freight and passengers coming from the East were left on the marshy flat at the Iowa end of the bridge, the railroad company had but two alternatives—either to recognize that as the terminus, or to make of the Bridge Company a transfer company to haul the cars across and deliver them at the Union Pacific station in Omaha. The latter course is being pursued. The bill pending obliges the railroad to operate the bridge as a continuous part of its line, and thus gives Iowa the coveted terminus.

HONORABLE LONG DEFERRED.

HISTORY OF THE BRONZE STATUE OF JEFFERSON—ITS RENOVATION AND RESTORATION TO THE CAPITOL.

[FROM A REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18.—A distinguished Democrat, in view of the result of recent elections, wrote lately, "Justice is slow but sure," and the same inscription with greater propriety might have been engraved on a statue which was last week returned to the Capitol, after an absence of nearly 50 years. In the year 1823, Lieut. U. P. Levy of the United States Navy presented to the country a colossal bronze statue of Jefferson. This work of art had been produced in Paris, under his own eye, by David and Goussier.

The offer of this gift was referred to the Committee on the Library, and Edward Everett reported a resolution to the House that it be placed in the square at the east of the Capitol. Some discussion ensued as to the propriety of the acceptance by Congress of a gift from a citizen. Criticisms of the statue as a work of art and as a portrait of Jefferson were also made by those opposed to the acceptance, but finally the resolution was passed. In the Senate, also, the matter received attention, and a resolution was agreed to. But the House and Senate resolutions were not the same. In 1835 further action was asked for by the Committee on Public Buildings, but none was taken. During this time the statue had stood in the Rotunda, where it remained until further action until during Polk's administration when it was removed to the grounds of the Executive Mansion. There it remained nearly thirty years, its right hand pointing to the Declaration of Independence more enduring than bronze, and its left holding the pen mightier than the sword. The material used not being of the best description or not adapted to exposure, at last became much corroded, and Mr. Sumner, recognizing the intrinsic merits of the work or the celebrity of the sculptor, a year ago introduced a resolution in regard to its preservation, and the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds were instructed to consider the expediency of providing for its protection. This action called forth a letter from Mr. James P. Levy, a brother of the donor, giving a synopsis of its history, and asking Congress to either accept it or return it to the family, who desired its preservation in order to honor Jefferson and perpetuate the memory of the donor, who had been for 50 years a meritorious officer of the United States, had been instrumental in the abolition of corporal punishment in the navy, and an ardent admirer of Jefferson at whose old residence, Monticello, he had lived and died. In a few days the Committee recommended that the statue be accepted with grateful appreciation and that it be placed in the National Statuary Hall after being properly repaired. It has been renovated at Philadelphia, and on Friday was placed in position by the side of Dr. Stone's Hamilton and opposite Washington. The base of the statue proper has on one side rudely etched the inscription, "Presented by United Philopoei of the United States Navy to his fellow-citizens, 1823," and on the other side, "Fondle à Paris par Howard Thomas et ses disciples. P. J. David, D. Angers, Sculpt. 1823."

The restored and renovated statue of the author of the Declaration has been placed upon a variegated pedestal of very beautiful marble, with beauteous trimmings of exquisite statuary.

VALUE OF ALASKA TO THE UNITED STATES.

DISCOURAGING REPORT OF A SPECIAL AGENT OF THE TREASURY—THE STORIES OF ITS WEALTH PURE FICTION—THE ONLY SOURCE OF REVENUE—THE COST OF KEEPING THE TERRITORY.

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 18.—Mr. Henry Elliott, who went to Alaska last summer, as Special Agent of the Treasury, to look after the interests of the Government on the islands where the fur seal is taken, is preparing a report on the value of the entire Territory to the United States, which will have the merit of being based upon the extended personal observations of the writer. Mr. Elliott has spent a great deal of time in Alaska, both before and since its purchase, and has probably seen more of its rocks and icebergs than any other American. All the stories of its mineral wealth, and of the value of its fisheries, he says, are pure fictions. Its surface is a mass of basaltic rock, which as all geologists know contains no mineral deposits. What little soil there is produces little that is useful to man, and the fisheries, which were described as of immense value when the treaty for buying the region was pending, do not yield food enough to supply the natives. The only portion of the whole vast domain which yields any revenue to the Government is the fur seal islands. From the tax on the skins of the animals taken on these islands the Treasury gets about \$200,000 annually. Against this single item of revenue Mr. Elliott offsets the cost of maintaining troops in the Territory, which amounts to about \$200,000 a year, and the expense of the civil establishment at Sitka and in the seal islands. Without counting interest on the purchase money paid Russia, which at six per cent would amount to \$120,000 a year, the balance sheet shows a heavy deficit. The United States is therefore paying a large sum for the empty honor of possessing a vast, desolate region, which is totally unfit for the home of civilized beings, and can never by any possibility be anything but a burden for the country to carry.

CENTENNIAL PLANS AND PROSPECTS.

A BILL FOR A SMALL CONGRESSIONAL APPROPRIATION FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES—PROPOSED NATIONAL EXHIBITS—NO GRANT FOR GENERAL PURPOSES TO BE APPLIED FOR THIS SESSION.

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 18.—No application for a grant of money for the general purposes of the Centennial will be made to Congress this session. It is suggested, however, that a small appropriation ought to be made to pay the expense of making certain national exhibits which will be nobody's business to make if not the Government's, but which will be essential to anything like a full display of the resources and industries of the country. Such an appropriation would not be objected to by those who are regularly opposed to the Treasury being added with the chief expense of the Philadelphia Fair. Among the special National exhibits which it is urged the Government should make are the following:

1. A display of arms, accoutrements, hospital equipment, and other war material.

2. A collection of the Navy Department of whatever it may have that is worth showing.

3. Such an exhibit as will freely illustrate the work of the Coast Survey.

4. Maps, books, and, together with pamphlets in most European languages for free distribution to convey information respecting our homestead and general public land system.

5. A thorough collection of agricultural products from all sections of the country. This ought to be intrusted to the Agricultural Department, unless it is feared that there are not brains enough in that concern to make such a collection.

6. A collection to illustrate the mineral resources of the country. To be at all satisfactory, this branch of the work should be placed in the hands of a man of special qualifications in the way of scientific attainments and knowledge of the country.

7. An exhibit of all the various woods found in the United States, with such information about each as would make the display of scientific and commercial value.

8. An exhibit of our fisheries similar to those made by Sweden and Norway at Vienna last year, but of course much more extensive. This should include preserved specimens of all the food fishes of our coasts and rivers, and of the nets, implements, boats, &c., used in catching them.

9. As complete an exhibit as can be made of the educational systems of the country, including not only textbooks and school furniture, but two or three model school-houses and large photographs of all the principal universities and colleges in the country. The Bureau of Education is the proper official body for organizing such a department, and is competent to do the work.

Unless the Government provides for making these National exhibits and collections, they will not be made at all. It is the business of the Centennial Commissioners to erect buildings and hold the Fair, not to furnish the objects displayed, and no private citizen, firm, or corporation can be expected to spend money which brings no return save in the way of reflecting credit on the nation at large. If, however, such exhibits as are mentioned above and others which will readily suggest themselves be not made, the Centennial will be merely a big fair to make the nation look at its own poverty and to advertise tradesmen's wares and inventors' devices, and will fall far below in purpose and accomplishment the London, Paris, and Vienna Exhibitions.

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[FROM A REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18.—Mr. Henry Elliott, who went to Alaska last summer, as Special Agent of the Treasury, to look after the interests of the Government on the islands where the fur seal is taken, is preparing a report on the value of the entire Territory to the United States, which will have the merit of being based upon the extended personal observations of the writer. Mr. Elliott has spent a great deal of time in Alaska, both before and since its purchase, and has probably seen more of its rocks and icebergs than any other American. All the stories of its mineral wealth, and of the value of its fisheries, he says, are pure fictions. Its surface is a mass of basaltic rock, which as all geologists know contains no mineral deposits. What little soil there is produces little that is useful to man, and the fisheries, which were described as of immense value when the treaty for buying the region was pending, do not yield food enough to supply the natives. The only portion of the whole vast domain which yields any revenue to the Government is the fur seal islands. From the tax on the skins of the animals taken on these islands the Treasury gets about \$200,000 annually. Against this single item of revenue Mr. Elliott offsets the cost of maintaining troops in the Territory, which amounts to about \$200,000 a year, and the expense of the civil establishment at Sitka and in the seal islands. Without counting interest on the purchase money paid Russia, which at six per cent would amount to \$120,000 a year, the balance sheet shows a heavy deficit. The United States is therefore paying a large sum for the empty honor of possessing a vast, desolate region, which is totally unfit for the home of civilized beings, and can never by any possibility be anything but a burden for the country to carry.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18.—No application for a grant of money for the general purposes of the Centennial will be made to Congress this session. It is suggested, however, that a small appropriation ought to be made to pay the expense of making certain national exhibits which will be nobody's business to make if not the Government's, but which will be essential to anything like a full display of the resources and industries of the country. Such an appropriation would not be objected to by those who are regularly opposed to the Treasury being added with the chief expense of the Philadelphia Fair. Among the special National exhibits which it is urged the Government should make are the following:

1. A display of arms, accoutrements, hospital equipment, and other war material.

2. A collection of the Navy Department of whatever it may have that is worth showing.

3. Such an exhibit as will freely illustrate the work of the Coast Survey.

4. Maps, books, and, together with pamphlets in most European languages for free distribution to convey information respecting our homestead and general public land system.

5. A thorough collection of agricultural products from all sections of the country. This ought to be intrusted to the Agricultural Department, unless it is feared that there are not brains enough in that concern to make such a collection.

6. A collection to illustrate the mineral resources of the country. To be at all satisfactory, this branch of the work should be placed in the hands of a man of special qualifications in the way of scientific attainments and knowledge of the country.

7. An exhibit of all the various woods found in the United States, with such information about each as would make the display of scientific and commercial value.

8. An exhibit of our fisheries similar to those made by Sweden and Norway at Vienna last year, but of course much more extensive. This should include preserved specimens of all the food fishes of our coasts and rivers, and of the nets, implements, boats, &c., used in catching them.

9. As complete an exhibit as can be made of the educational systems of the country, including not only textbooks and school furniture, but two or three model school-houses and large photographs of all the principal universities and colleges in the country. The Bureau of Education is the proper official body for organizing such a department, and is competent to do the work.

Unless the Government provides for making these National exhibits and collections, they will not be made at all. It is the business of the Centennial Commissioners to erect buildings and hold the Fair, not to furnish the objects displayed, and no private citizen, firm, or corporation can be expected to spend money which brings no return save in the way of reflecting credit on the nation at large. If, however, such exhibits as are mentioned above and others which will readily suggest themselves be not made, the Centennial will be merely a big fair to make the nation look at its own poverty and to advertise tradesmen's wares and inventors' devices, and will fall far below in purpose and accomplishment the London, Paris, and Vienna Exhibitions.

A new machine for making horse shoes has been completed after several years labor by Mr. Snyder of the Pedegar Works, Richmond. The inventor claims for it that it makes two shoes at one revolution and produces them as rapidly as 60 per minute.

The offer of this gift was referred to the Committee on the Library, and Edward Everett reported a resolution to the House that it be placed in the square at the east of the Capitol. Some discussion ensued as to the propriety of the acceptance by Congress of a gift from a citizen. Criticisms of the statue as a work of art and as a portrait of Jefferson were also made by those opposed to the acceptance, but finally the resolution was passed. In the Senate, also, the matter received attention, and a resolution was agreed to. But the House and Senate resolutions were not the same. In 1835 further action was asked for by the Committee on Public Buildings, but none was taken. During this time the statue had stood in the Rotunda, where it remained until further action until during Polk's administration when it was removed to the grounds of the Executive Mansion. There it remained nearly thirty years, its right hand pointing to the Declaration of Independence more enduring than bronze, and its left holding the pen mightier than the sword. The material used not being of the best description or not adapted to exposure, at last became much corroded, and Mr. Sumner, recognizing the intrinsic merits of the work or the celebrity of the sculptor, a year ago introduced a resolution in regard to its preservation, and the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds were instructed to consider the expediency of providing for its protection. This action called forth a letter from Mr. James P. Levy, a brother of the donor, giving a synopsis of its history, and asking Congress to either accept it or return it to the family, who desired its preservation in order to honor Jefferson and perpetuate the memory of the donor, who had been for 50 years a meritorious officer of the United States, had been instrumental in the abolition of corporal punishment in the navy, and an ardent admirer of Jefferson at whose old residence, Monticello, he had lived and died. In a few days the Committee recommended that the statue be accepted with grateful appreciation and that it be placed in the National Statuary Hall after being properly repaired. It has been renovated at Philadelphia, and on Friday was placed in position by the side of Dr. Stone's Hamilton and opposite Washington. The base of the statue proper has on one side rudely etched the inscription, "Presented by United Philopoei of the United States Navy to his fellow-citizens, 1823," and on the other side, "Fondle à Paris par Howard Thomas et ses disciples. P. J. David, D. Angers, Sculpt. 1823."

The restored and renovated statue of the author of the Declaration has been placed upon a variegated pedestal of very beautiful marble, with beauteous trimmings of exquisite statuary.

VALUE OF ALASKA TO THE UNITED STATES.

DISCOURAGING REPORT OF A SPECIAL AGENT OF THE TREASURY—THE STORIES OF ITS WEALTH PURE FICTION—THE ONLY SOURCE OF REVENUE—THE COST OF KEEPING THE TERRITORY.

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